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AUTHOR Blair, Kristine
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ABSTRACT

A current problem at many American universities is that tenure and promotion procedures continue to privilege print-based evidence of teaching and research productivity, or do not acknowledge the impact of technology on teaching, scholarship, and service. Despite these problems, this paper makes the case for electronic teaching portfolios as professional development tools for both faculty and graduate students, and outlines a range of training and professional development initiatives. As part of the discussion, both advantages and disadvantages of electronic portfolios are discussed. In spite of the possible benefits, institutional education about the potential of electronic portfolios is necessary. Ultimately, such efforts are a way of providing incentive and reward for faculty to utilize technology in ways that genuinely enhance their teaching and overall professional development. (Author)

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Electronic Portfolios in Tenure and Promotion Decisions: Making a Virtual Case

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Dr. Kristine Blair
Associate Professor of English
Associate Director
Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology
Bowling Green State University, Ohio
United States
kblair@bgnet.bgsu.edu

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Abstract: A current problem at many American universities is that tenure and promotion procedures continue to privilege print-based evidence of teaching and research productivity, or do not acknowledge the impact of technology on teaching, scholarship, and service. Despite these problems, this paper makes the case for electronic teaching portfolios as professional development tools for both faculty and graduate students and outlines a range of training and professional development initiatives. As part of the discussion, both advantages and disadvantages of electronic portfolios are discussed. In spite of the possible benefits, institutional education about the potential of electronic portfolios is necessary. Ultimately, such efforts are a way of providing incentive and reward for faculty to utilize technology in ways that genuinely enhance their teaching and overall professional development.

Introduction: The Case for Electronic Portfolios

In their article "Implementing the Seven Principles: Technology as Lever," Arthur Chickering and Stephen Ehrmann (1997) apply Chickering and Gamson's (1987) original principles for good practice in undergraduate education to the use of technology in the classroom. Among those principles are the following: Good practice encourages contacts between students and faculty; develops reciprocity and cooperation among students; uses active learning techniques; gives prompt feedback; and several others related to learning styles and maintaining curricular standards. In their overview of the advances in educational technologies that help to foster some of these goals--including synchronous and asynchronous discussion networks--Chickering and Ehrmann question "How are we to know whether given technologies are as useful in promoting the Seven Principles and learning." Although such a question focuses on the role of technology, faculty are often encouraged to analyze and evaluate the relative effectiveness of any instructional strategy on student learning outcomes, whether it be cooperative learning, service learning, problem-based learning, or more lecture and presentation based modes of content delivery. Thus, in order to document indicators of teaching effectiveness, many universities across the United States have opted for the teaching portfolio, a collection of multi-genred documents that reflect teacher professional development and quality of teaching and learning.

Yet because technological literacy is so much a part of teacher and student professional development, and because of the changing student populations and student needs that call for distance or distributed teaching and learning forums, it is clear that technology plays a large role in the assessment of student learning outcomes and the demonstration of teaching effectiveness, common topics in the general assessment of candidates for tenure and promotion. Despite the significant impact of technology on the professoriate at forums such as the American Association of Higher Education's 2001 Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards, the manner in which candidates continue to be assessed focuses on activities and genres that are more traditionally researched based, and print-researched based at that. Ironically, as we recognize that student work can be created, delivered, and assessed electronically, and often through an electronic portfolio approach, faculty work—even when technological in nature—is all too frequently

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reviewed in a print forum and not an electronic one. Consider, for instance, the lessened impact of reviewing a faculty member's online syllabi as "hardcopy" in a portfolio, with departmental and college level review committees unable or unwilling to review materials online and admittedly ill-equipped to do so because of a lack of "local" criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of technological learning spaces.

While Chickering and Ehrmann as well as scholars such as Lawrence Ragan (1999) acknowledge that "good teaching is good teaching," whether it be face to face or technologically mediated, there are some distinctions between how such effectiveness may manifest itself between one environment and another. For instance, Dave Madden's online discussion of the "17 Elements of Good Online Courses" notes a range of indicators for effectiveness, including navigability, usability, and instructional considerations ("material should be presented in such a way that it is compatible with a number of learning styles, "students should be able to readily and easily communicate with the instructor online, and "special attention should be given to testing design and procedures" online). Indeed, in their article "The Electronically Augmented Teaching Portfolio," Lieberman and Rueter (1997) contend that technology offers several options for enhancing the traditional print-based portfolio, including the ability to "capture information about our teaching that previously was not part of our teaching frame of reference" and allowing "efficient means for storing and critiquing the portfolio" itself (p.47).

Regardless of these advantages, tenure and promotion candidates still face difficulties in educating peers and administrators about the impact of technology on teaching, particularly in relation to academic workload. Often those who are designated as "early adopters" of both face-to-face and online educational technologies are tapped as administrative resources as well. Such individuals are frequently called on to serve on committees and to assist in departmental and university-wide faculty development initiatives that are certainly rewarding, although not always "rewarded" at tenure and promotion time, given traditional weightings at many universities that privilege research over teaching and especially over service. Although faculty should be informed about whether and how work with technology and online teaching/scholarship will be considered in the tenure and promotion process, members of tenure and promotion committees, chairs, and deans must educate themselves about candidates' technological work. Thus the importance of such work rests jointly on the committee and the candidate.

Moreover, because it is important that the candidate's work be evaluated in the medium in which it was produced, it is equally important to solicit internal and external reviewers qualified and prepared to review non-traditional sources of evidence, including websites, discussion boards, CD-ROMS, and instructional software. Yet the current problem at many institutions is that tenure, promotion, and merit documents continue to privilege print-based scholarship or do not acknowledge the impact of technology on teaching, scholarship, and service. Despite this continuing problem, this paper outlines a range university-wide training and other faculty development programs implemented at Bowling Green State that support an initiative for electronic teaching portfolios as professional development tools. For Lieberman and Rueter (1997) the advantages of electronic portfolios include more technological work being viewed in its original medium, more types of information being displayed, more immediate access and distribution (via the web and CD-ROM), and more visual and audio documentation appealing to diverse reading and learning styles, as opposed to strictly textual evidence. But despite these possible benefits, it is clear that institutional education about the potential of electronic portfolios is necessary. While technological problems may include the need to provide portfolio readers with appropriate hardware or software to access information on disk, CD or the web, there is also need to de-emphasize the "bells and whistles" of the portfolio to instead using the opportunity for a electronic-based format to support the same educational objectives and curricular contexts as its print-based counterpart. Thus, in addition to training and professional development initiatives, this paper also outlines both candidate and administrative responsibilities in educating peers and reviewers about the role of technology in tenure and promotion. Ultimately, such efforts are a way of providing incentive, support, and reward systems that encourage faculty to utilize technology in ways that genuinely enhance their teaching and overall professional development.

Training and Professional Development Programs

Whether a tenure and promotion portfolio is print-based or electronic, it is clear that a candidate is indeed making a persuasive case about the quality of his or her teaching, scholarship, and service

contribution. In the case of teaching with technology, candidates, while they may indeed possess some technological savvy, may not possess the institutional savvy about ways to discuss, organize, document, and distribute electronic materials in tenure and promotion. As a result, faculty development units such as BGSU's Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology (http://www.bgsu.edu/offices/ctlt), often provide a range of theoretical and hands on training for faculty and graduate student instructors wanting to utilize technology as a teaching and professional development tool. The following are a range of existing programs that can help to contribute to such development.

Technology and Teaching Institutes

In spring 2000 and winter 2001, The Center for Teaching, Learning, & Technology developed a three-day institute "Developing Online Pedagogies: Integrating the How and the Why" for faculty. As a pilot program, the institute was designed to promote technology infusion in an integrated way and serve as a significant professional development and incentive opportunity for faculty. The institute was designed to help participants define and determine the extent to which technology can enhance teaching and learning within their specific curricular contexts and teaching formats. Hands-on sessions helped participants develop a range of technological skills to integrate and manage an online presence and assess its impact on pedagogical goals. Among the hands-on sessions were the following:

- Developing and Managing an Online Presence with Course Management Tools
- Creating and Converting Syllabi with .html and authoring tools
- Delivering Classroom and Web Presentations through Microsoft PowerPoint
- Scanning and Digital Imaging with Adobe Photoshop
- Storing and Distributing Course Materials with CD-ROM Technology

Participants had the opportunity to bring relevant pedagogical materials for use in sessions and to work on independently during several "open-lab" times. Staff consultants were available during sessions to provide both pedagogical and technological support. In addition, luncheon sessions featured faculty from across the university utilizing online pedagogies and addressed issues such as managing and assessing online courses as well as institutional support and reward for technology-based course development. A final session allowed participants to save to CD-ROM all materials produced during the institute and discussed this technology as one mode of delivery of course content for students as well as the tenure and promotion portfolio. In addition to a notebook of useful documentation and articles related to online teaching and learning, including important issues such as copyright and fair use, participants received a follow-up individual consultation session with suggestions for continuing their online work and to work with technological consultants and faculty experts in the area of technology-infused pedagogies.

Portfolios as Professional Development Tools

The Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology also developed a series of workshops on the subject of teaching portfolios for faculty and graduate student instructors, one focusing on print-based portfolios and one focusing on electronic portfolios.

In the case of the print-based workshop, "Teaching Portfolios as Professional Development Tools," general questions addressed were: What is a teaching portfolio? Why should you have one? What documents can/should be included? For whom is such a document produced? A special focus of this session was the "teaching narrative," a vital document that determines what other documents to include as evidence of teaching effectiveness. Participants brainstormed possibilities for their own portfolios based on their particular curricular context.

A second session was titled "Developing your Electronic Portfolio." General questions included: When should a teaching or professional development portfolio be an "electronic portfolio"? Who is the audience for an e-portfolio? How are documents similar to and different from a print-based portfolio? Facilitators overviewed the goals, formats, and delivery options for e-portfolios, including web and CD-ROM and also profiled a range of electronic document formats, including a curriculum vitae in both hypertext markup language (.html) and portable document format (.pdf), and a teaching philosophy in digital video format as a model of the ways an e-portfolio can enhance traditional print-based genres required for tenure and promotion. Participants were asked to bring a copy of their resume or some other document in Microsoft Word to get a sense of how such a document could be easily converted to a format appropriate for web or CD-delivery.

In addition, because our own institution does not currently accept electronic portfolios only, both sessions demonstrated the integration of print and electronic formats, focusing on specific references to URLs in print-based portfolios as well as inclusion of CDs in the overall hardcopy portfolio. Electronic portfolios in CD-format were profiled in both sessions as a way of storing and delivering a range of documents, whether they be print-based or more genuinely electronic document formats. Given the sheer bulk of print-based portfolios and the space and bandwidth restrictions of campus and commercial provider webservers, CD-ROM versions of portfolios were stressed as viable for both internal and external levels of review, particularly because external reviews tend to privilege of traditional model of scholarship that often exclude a range of teaching materials.

Internal and External Grant Initiatives

The importance of grant initiatives cannot be stressed strongly enough, for in addition to providing vital resources in the development of technology-infused curricula, grants are seen as a form of scholarship in many tenure and promotion contexts. At Bowling Green State University, a number of internal and external grant initiatives have helped in this area:

Tech Grants 2000

Promoted as an opportunity to take advantage of new technology infrastructure project at the University, the internal "Tech Grant 2000" program offered a series of three internal grant initiatives designed to help faculty and staff promote creativity in technology to enhance teaching, learning and business operations: Development grants ranging from $1,000 to $10,000 for teaching and learning projects that would be applicable to hardware, software, faculty course reductions, and student/staff technical support; travel grants awarded to faculty and staff for travel to universities and conferences for "best practices" observation of the ways in which technology is used and supported; and laptop grants that allowed faculty and staff to enhance and augment the quality and quantity of technology available to them through their own academic units for both teaching and research. Recipients of these grants totaled over 150 faculty and staff members, including the Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology for developing online training tutorials and best practice travel for two of its staff members.

Ohio Learning Network Faculty Professional Development Grant Program

The Center for Teaching, Learning & Technology applied for and received a $50,000 external grant to help faculty at the University's two-year branch campus receive training and support for distributed learning initiatives. Because the branch campus is 90 miles away from the main campus where the Center is housed, the incentive for this program was the ability to provide onsite and online training for faculty in a way that alleviated the workload for the cadre of primarily pre-tenure faculty awarded mini-grant (similar to the Tech Grant 2000 program) funding through this initiative to develop web-enhanced or fully online courses.

Other grant programs included several in the College of Education that focused on technology-infusion in the all courses required by pre-service teachers as a type of modeling process for this group. Both internal and external grants awarded for technology-based teaching ultimately bridge the gap between traditional research and teaching functions, thus helping to create a culture that fosters the "scholarship of teaching," a concept beneficial to both current and future faculty. Equally important, as more and more faculty adopt technology-based pedagogies, it will become increasingly important to develop policies and templates for helping them to analyze and assess the effectiveness of these pedagogies for the purposes of tenure and promotion.

Tenure, Promotion, and Technology-Infused Course Development

The following points address a range of guiding questions and responsibilities departmental and college review committees should acknowledge in evaluating the role technology plays in teaching, scholarship, and service, as well as in using technology as a medium for such evaluation.

Guiding Questions

- How can/must existing tenure and promotion guidelines regarding teaching effectiveness account for the changing delivery models of technology-based learning?
- How can the concept of "the scholarship of teaching" contribute to better understanding of the ways in which online teaching contributes to teaching, research, and potentially service?
- What constitutes "evidence" of teaching and learning effectiveness in a technology-infused education model?
- How does relying on a primarily print-based review of candidate files hinder understanding of the impact of technology on teaching and learning?
- How does the level of faculty support for course development (course reductions, reduced class size, technical support and team-development models) impact teaching effectiveness?
- What constituencies on campus must be involved in discussions of technology's role in tenure and promotion decisions? (Faculty Development units, Faculty Senate, college technology committees, departmental and college tenure and promotion committees)

Candidate Responsibilities

- To offer commentary within teaching narratives that "guide" internal and external reviewers to weigh and evaluate online course materials and to clearly connect technological initiatives with indicators of student success within that discipline.
- To arrange for "peer observation" and evaluation within an online/distance or any technological setting (Note that options may include virtual observation/participation of online discussions or chats, quantity and quality of course customization, ease of access and navigation to course materials, the extent to which courses account for multiple learning styles, and so forth).
- To provide specific evidence, preferably in its original medium, including transcripts of online discussions, web-syllabi and electronic course content in various media, and student technology projects
- To educate departmental and college review committees about existing guidelines within the discipline and through national distance learning organizations that would support the candidate.

Departmental/College Tenure and Promotion Committee Responsibilities

- To review and revise existing student evaluation forms to account for distributed learning models/technology based teaching
- To commit to review candidate's distance/technology-based teaching in its original medium (Video, Audio, WWW, CD-ROM)
- To collaborate with faculty development and instructional technology specialists and department/college technology committees for training of internal reviewers to review online course materials
- To secure external reviewers knowledgeable about the role of technology in teaching and learning and to provide reviewers with guidelines about departmental/university standards in this area for tenure and promotion
- To explore options for implementing an electronic teaching portfolio program for technology-based teaching and learning

Conclusion: Seeking Institutional Change

As some of the above guidelines indicate, some disciplines have relied on their major professional organizations (e.g., the Modern Language Association and the Conference on College Composition and

Communication) to help define and assess the role of technology in the curriculum. Yet to ensure institutional recognition of the importance of technology in tenure and promotion decisions, these national standards and guidelines must be contextualized around the role technology places in the localized teaching and learning community. For instance, rather than rely on solely on national and disciplinary guidelines, college and academic units can also rely on case studies of actual faculty examples of how technology is employed in the teaching, research, and service roles. This is particularly important at both the College and Provost review levels in which reviewers are outside the discipline and less able to assess how such work is valued within the tenuring unit.

Nevertheless, tenuring units must themselves be prepared to revise traditional teaching review processes, particularly student ratings and peer and supervisor evaluation. Indeed, in their discussion of evaluating online courses, Palloff and Pratt (1999) stress the importance of considering all aspects of the course, including student performance, course design, online conversation, and other elements that usually don't make their way to the standardized rating form. Because the ultimate goal is to help students meet the learning outcomes expected in a multimedia lab-based, significantly web-enhanced, or fully online course formats, tenure and promotion cases that demonstrate as specifically as possible the extent to which these outcomes were met are most likely to be successful ones. Electronic portfolio assessment has incredible potential in this regard. While teaching portfolios, including electronic teaching portfolios, are recommended for all teacher education students by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, such professional development tools must be extended to university-level educators. Yet in advocating such an initiative, the material conditions of the institution must be addressed, including issues of access, technical support, learning curve, workload, educational philosophy, and institutional rewards. More than any other group, the college professoriate is charged with educating future teachers and working professionals in the newest technologies of literacy and communication and with meeting the diverse needs of learners both inside and outside the traditional boundaries of academe. Electronic portfolios provide an opportunity to both demonstrate our curricular efforts in this arena and to be rewarded for those efforts. As this paper has stressed, working toward these goals is the collaborative institutional responsibility of faculty, administrators, departmental and college tenure/promotion committees, and faculty development units.

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